

USAID Launches \$200 Million Earthquake Reconstruction Program for Pakistan's Schools, Clinics and Livelihoods

Islamabad, May 19, 2006: Ambassador Randall Tobias, in his first trip outside of the United States as Director of United States Foreign Assistance, launched U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) earthquake reconstruction program in a groundbreaking ceremony today. USAID is rebuilding two schools that were destroyed in the October 8, 2005 earthquake using earthquake-resistant building techniques: Government Centennial Model High School for Boys, Dadar and the Government Girls Middle School, Dadar.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Tobias remarked, "Every journey must start with a first step – and, in this ceremony today, we mark the first step in an initiative that will ultimately rebuild dozens of schools and health facilities across the earthquake-affected region." Tobias also noted the high school's strong history of sending out highly-qualified students that have made contributions to the greater good.

During the event building contractors revealed architectural plans for the boys' and girls' schools. Heavy construction equipment is already in place and construction at the school sites will begin on Monday.

The Deputy of the Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) Lieutenant General Nadeem Ahmed and the Education Minister for NWFP also addressed the assembly. Lt. Gen. Nadeem said, "It is a very powerful thing to see that reconstruction – bricks and mortar – is underway. USAID has been assisting the government since the earthquake and ERRA looks forward to continued partnership."

USAID has now begun the implementation phase of its four-year \$200 million Reconstruction Program. In the first year of the program, USAID will begin construction of 50 schools and 15 clinics that were destroyed in the earthquake. The program not only constructs buildings, it also furnishes them and strengthens the institutions that run the buildings through staff and management training. Livelihoods activities will invigorate local economies through worker training, microfinancing and micro and small business activities.

In all, the United States, through USAID, is providing more than \$1.5 billion in development assistance to Pakistan over the next five years to improve education, health, governance and economic growth. In addition, the United States has pledged a total of \$510 million in earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts to assist the people of Pakistan and to support Pakistani government relief and reconstruction efforts.